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## NOTES AND DISCUSSION.

**An Alleged Old Source on the Jews in Yemen.**

DR. ALEXANDER KOHUT, in the introduction to his valuable treatise on Abu Manzûr Al-Dhamârî's *Commentaries on the Pentateuch*,<sup>1</sup> speaks of the tales of earlier authors concerning the Jews in Yemen. He refers to Dr. Neubauer's article in the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW (Vol. III., pp. 604—622), and notices an old tale concerning the Jews in Yemen, which is not mentioned by Dr. Neubauer. This tale Kohut takes from the English edition of the travels of J. J. Benjamin, *Eight Years in Asia and Africa*, p. 169, and he makes the following quotation, "In the year 1522, Nibuar, a captain in the Danish navy, who had been sent out by Frederick V., found in Yemen many Jews, especially in the capital, Sana, where he numbered almost 2,000 souls," etc. This is undoubtedly a very interesting passage, as the learned editor of the *Aruch* has taken it here without suspicion from the travels of the younger Benjamin, who followed the steps of his famous namesake of Tudela, but it is by no means so authentic. A Danish captain of the navy, who had been sent by his king to South Arabia in the year 1522, therefore about the time in which Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, was studying at Wittenberg—this passage must cause some difficulty to Dr. Kohut. For if he put down the name of the King as Frederick V., he must have recollected that this King of Denmark reigned not in the sixteenth, but in the eighteenth century. Kohut, however, in spite of his varied and tried critical powers, has here been led astray, and taken the information of Benjamin into his own work, as if resting upon actual facts, without making further inquiry. However, from what has been stated above, it can be seen that this information cannot possibly be supported as a fact. But how came the traveller, J. J. Benjamin, to make these statements? I am in a position to point out the rather amusing origin of these pseudo-tales concerning the Jews in Yemen.

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings of the Third Biennial Convention of the Jewish Theological Seminary Association, with an essay on Manzûr-al-Dhamârî's Hebrew *Commentary on the Pentateuch*. New York, 1892.

First of all, I repeat the account of Benjamin as it appears in the German original of his book of travels (*Acht Jahre in Asien und Africa*, Hanover, 1858), p. 164:—"Im Jahre 1522 fand der dänische Schiffscapitän Nibuar, von König Friedrich V. ausgesandt, in Yemen und namentlich in der Hauptstadt Sana, wo er fast 2,000 Seelen zählte, viele Juden, über welche er höchst interessante Berichte lieferte." And a little farther on, p. 165, he says:—"The captain of the Danish navy, whom we have mentioned above, also narrates that in the district of Sana, and in Arabia Felix, there are many Jews, who live in the middle of the desert, in a country of independent races."

Now this "Nibuar, the captain of the Danish navy," is evidently no one else than Carsten Niebuhr, and the ultimate source of Benjamin's information is the famous book of travels, *Beschreibung von Arabien, Aus eigenen Beobachtungen und im Lande selbst gesummelten Nachrichten abgefasst von Carsten Niebuhr*. Copenhagen, 1772. It was in reality Frederick V., King of Denmark, who, as Niebuhr related in his preface, sent him, together with other learned men, on an expedition to explore Arabia, and especially Yemen. On January 4th, 1761, the company went on board a war-ship, which brought them from Copenhagen to Egypt, and, in the end of December, 1762, landed them in Yemen. As regards the accounts of the number of Jews in Sana, and of the independent Jewish races, I have found nothing in the above-mentioned work, where Niebuhr, on page 184, speaks of the Jews in South Arabia. Perhaps they come from the greater work of Niebuhr—at present I cannot lay my hand on it—which appeared in 1774 and 1778, in two volumes—*Reisebeschreibung von Arabien*. But how are we to explain the date 1522, in which year, according to Benjamin, that expedition started? In a sure and simple manner, through the following process. Benjamin derived the year from a secondary Hebrew source, in which the year 1762, the date of Niebuhr's arrival in Yemen, was reckoned in the corresponding year of the world (*anno mundi*) as ח'קכ"ב = 522. Benjamin, however, thought that was a date of the Christian era, and, accordingly, added 1,000, so that it became 1522. The change of Niebuhr into Nibuar comes through the transliteration in Hebrew, נִיבּוּר or נִיבּוֹאָר, in which the *e* and the *h* are not expressed. His transformation into a captain can perhaps be explained from the fact that Benjamin mistook the unknown Christian name, Carsten, in its Hebrew transliteration קָרְסְטָן, for קָרְפְּטָן.

It must be mentioned that this change from Carsten into Captain is already to be found in Naphtali Hartwig Wessely, the famous friend of Moses Mendelssohn. We read in his Appendix, entitled, מגיד חדשות,

างרת אורהות עולם, ושם היה אפיטען ניבור בפקודת פרידריך:—  
the Prague edition (1793) of Abraham Farisols  
the following lines (p. 206):—  
ה חמישי זל מלך דענימארק וזה שלשים שנה וגס הוא מצא ביעמאן יהודים  
רבים ובעיר המלוכה סאנא יש בכמו אלפיים בעלי בתים והרבה דברים  
עליהן:

W. BACHER.

Budapest, September, 1892.

“*Apodasmo Judæorum capta* is unintelligible” wrote the late Professor Grätz (JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, Vol. III., p. 207, note 1). Yet a glance at Liddell and Scott will remove the difficulty. *ἀποδασμός*, δ, (*ἀποδατέομαι*), *a division, part of a whole*. Thuc. i. 12, gives exactly the sense required; and the Latin writer who has transliterated this word instead of translating it, may easily have altered the gender. “*Apodasmo Judæorum capta*” in S. Jerome is thus exactly equivalent to “*partem aliquam de . . . Judæis . . . cepit*” in the Armenian version recast into Latin; and to the Greek of Syncellus, *μερικὴν* (comp. Cheyne, JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, Vol. IV., p. 108, n. 2: *μικρὴν* as quoted by Grätz, III., 208, n. 1) *αἰχμαλωσίαν εἰλεν Ἰουδαίων*, Cp. Zech. xiv. 2.

It occurs to me to add that St. Jerome probably mistook *ἀποδασμός* for the name of a place, and that his words must be understood “*Apodasmo [scilicet urbe] Judæorum capta*.” (Compare Graetz’s footnote.) This explains both the transliteration and the change of gender.

While on this subject, I should like to add a suggestion with regard to Is. lxvi., which Cheyne in the article above cited refers to the same occasion (JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, IV. 120). Some of the difficulties of this hypothesis would perhaps be removed if vv. 7-14 (“Before she travailed . . . comforted in Jerusalem,”) were regarded as a *pericope* entirely distinct from the context in which it now occurs. These verses have nothing in common as to subject-matter with those which immediately precede and follow them. They actually interrupt the evident connection between vv. 5, 6, and v. 15; and (if an English reader may be allowed to submit to the judgment of others his own impressions of style) they might well be ascribed, like chapter xxxv. and Jer. x. 1-16, to the principal author of Is. xl.-lxii., the so-called “Second Isaiah.”